

TWO SERMONS

Preached at

St. HELLEN'S

Aug¹⁰th and 24th, 1729.

By JOHN GURSE.

The Second Edition.

LONDON:

Printed for Richard Hery at the Bible
and Crown in the Poultry near Chancery.

MDCCLXXII.

34

Printed for Richard Dutton, at the
Sign of the Crown, in St. Pauls Church-yard,
near the North Gate.

TWO
MOMENTS
OF
THE
LIFE
OF
ST. HILLIARY



ST. HILLIARY

Printed and Sold by
R. DUTTON, at the
Sign of the Crown, in St. Pauls Church-yard,
near the North Gate.

BY JOHN CUTLER

THE SECOND EDITION

LONDON

Printed for Richard Dutton, at the
Sign of the Crown, in St. Pauls Church-yard,
near the North Gate.

MDCCLXXII

Printed

THE
INTRODUCTION

Acts ix. 20.

And straightway he preached Christ in the Synagogues, that he is the Son of God.

TO preach Christ is so unfashionable in our age, so much a term of reproach, and so disagreeable to the taste of many, who love to rank themselves among the polite, that nothing can more expose a man to their contempt and scorn than to attempt it. They seem as much to disdain him, as the Epicurean and Stoick Philosophers did the Apostle Paul, whom they ridiculed for preaching Jesus and the resurrection, as if he were a fetter sort of strange gods. This was not much to be wonder'd at in men of their education, temper, and profession. But where is the sense or decency of persons calling themselves by Christ's name, and sneering at it, and doing what they can to thrust him out of their religion; or to lessen his and their own concernment with him in it. This is really preposterous and amazing.

But they that know Christ themselves, and are called to preach him to others, have no reason to be afraid of ashamed to own him.

A 2

and

The Introduction.

and to spread his glories thro' all their holy ministrations. The Apostles counted him the glory of theirs: All their preaching was characterized by their *preaching Christ*, it centered in him, and derived its efficacy from him. And I hope there are still some among us, that reverence and adore his sacred name, and would count it their glory to be able to say with them, *Thanks be to God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.* — *For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.*

2 Cor. ii.
14, 17.

The Apostle Paul, spoken of in our text, began his ministry with *preaching Christ*, and persisted in it to the end of his days; though he himself was once as infamous for his furious opposition to him, as he afterwards was famous for his zealous preaching him. He in our context is called by his *Jewish* name *Saul*; but afterwards, when he was made the Apostle of the *Gentiles*, he was commonly known by his *Roman* name *Paul*, the more acceptable name to them.

In the beginning of this chapter we find him *breathing out threatnings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord*, and going with sanguinary credentials from the *Jewish Sanhedrim* to *Damascus*, that if he found any of them, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

But

The Introduction.

But Christ met him in the way, and by a remarkable conduct of providence and grace reveal'd himself to him, gave an effectual turn to his mind and heart, favoured him with a vision, and fill'd him with the Holy Ghost. He then staid certain days with the disciples at *Damascus*. And straitway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. This account runs thro' the chapter, as far as our text.

What an amazing change was here! what a monument of distinguishing sovereign grace was this! he of a vile and bigotted persecutor, became a real Christian, and an eminent minister of Christ at once. He called upon his name, and preached him to others. *The Gal. i. 12,* gospel that was preached of him, was not of *15, 16.* *ter man.* For he neither received it of man, neither was he taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. And when it pleased God, who separated him from his mother's womb, and called him by his grace, to reveal his Son in him, — immediately he conferred not with flesh and blood. But, as we have it in our text, he straitway preached Christ. Out of the abundance of his heart his mouth spake. He no sooner knew Christ, but took the first opportunity to preach him in the synagogues of *Damascus*, where he then was.

There were more synagogues than one in that city, as there were in several others. And the Apostle went to all these, or to as many of 'em as he could be admitted to; and there began

began his ministry, *preaching Christ, that he is the Son of God.* Or, as it might be rendered, * *He preached Christ, because he is the Son of God.* The first way of reading it intimates what he particularly preach'd concerning Christ, viz. that he is the Son of God. And the other gives the reason of his preaching Christ, viz. because he is the Son of God,

In farther discoursing on these words, it may be proper to consider,

First, *The titles or characters, that describe the subject of the Apostle's ministry, and,*

Secondly, *His preaching upon that subject.*

Let us consider,

First, *The titles or characters that describe the subject of the Apostle's ministry.* And they are *Christ, the Son of God.*

Here are *two* characters of him, whom the Apostle preached. They both relate to the same person, but are terms of different import. Otherwise the meaning of the proposition in our text would be only this, "He preached Christ, that he is Christ." Or, according to the other reading, "He preached Christ, because he is Christ." But I apprehend the term, *Christ*, more immediately relates to his office; and *the Son of God*, to his original nature, or divine person. And as the last of these is the foundation of the first, the order of discourse requires that we begin with that. Therefore,

* Εξαγγέλλει τὸν Χριστὸν, ὅτι αὐτὸς ἰσὺς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ.

The Son of God, &c.

I. The first title to be spoken to is *the Son of God*.

Christ is often called in Scripture *the Son of God*, his *own Son*, his *only begotten Son*, and by way of eminence and peculiarity, *the Son*, in distinction from the Father and Spirit, and from all other sons.

In treating on this title, *the Son of God*, I shall by divine assistance aim at two things.

1. *Settle the sense or meaning of it.* And,

2. *Offer something to support that meaning.*

1. *Settle the sense or meaning of this title, the Son of God.*

And here some difficulties must be removed before this character can be adjusted. I will therefore best answer my design to proceed by the three following propositions.

Prop. I. *The foundation of this title, the Son of God, doth not lye in his extraordinary conception and birth of the virgin.*

The Socinians place it here, and their principal argument for it lies in the angel's words, when he said to the virgin, *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: Therefore also, that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.* Luke i. 25.

But their conceit, built upon this passage, as if Christ's filiation took its rise from this extraordinary conception and birth, supposes that he was not the Son of God before, and that this title belongs to him only on the account

count of what he was *according to the flesh*. Both of which are suppositions directly contrary to the whole current of scripture, as will appear in some following parts of our discourse.

The design therefore of this passage is not to give an account of the original proper foundation of that name; but I take the meaning of it, as it lies in our translation, to be, that the production of Christ's human nature, in this extraordinary way by the Holy Ghost, was an intimation of the dignity of his glorious person, to whom it should be united; that he is indeed the Son of God: And therefore *that holy thing that should be born of her, should bear his name, or should be called the Son of God*. And so it amounts to much the same sense with what *was spoken of the Lord*
 Mat. i. 23. *by the prophet, saying, Behold a Virgin shall be with Child, and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted, is God with us.*

This is a citation of an ancient prophecy in *Isa. vii 14*. And the angel in his message to *Mary* had intimated that she was the virgin there intended, saying to her, *Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son, that Son whose name should be called Emmanuel; and with a reference hereunto, he tells her, that her conception, while a virgin, should be by the Holy Ghost, which would evidence her to be the mother of that Emmanuel; and therefore, according to that evidence, that holy thing which should be born of her, should be called the Son of God.* But

But there is another way of translating this last clause of the verse, and that is, *Even because (διὸ καὶ) that holy thing, which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.* And so his being called the Son of God, or his really being so (as this phrase often signifies) is given as the reason of this extraordinary birth, instead of the extraordinary birth's being given as the reason of his bearing that name. It was highly fit that his birth should be of this extraordinary miraculous kind, because of the dignity of his person, as the Son of God. Hence,

Prop. II. *It is not barely a title of office, or a title merely relative to his being the Messiah.*

The *Socinians* carry on the sonship of Christ from his birth, to his mission, resurrection from the dead, and exaltation at the Father's right hand. And their principal scriptures and arguments upon these heads have of late years been adopted, and urged with additional force, by some others, tho' with a contrary view; and therefore what may be answered to these, will be an answer to them.

Some, whom I love and honour, and who have exalted sentiments of the proper divinity of our dear Lord, have supposed that his filiation, or his being called the Son of God, hath no reference to his divine pre-existent nature, consider'd absolutely, or irrespectively to his office: but is purely oeconomic, and only relates to his being the Messiah. These,

contrary to the *Socinians*, advance this position with a good design for the honour of Christ; but I humbly think, without sufficient evidence, and with much more disadvantage than advantage, in the whole, to the glorious cause they intend to serve by it.

The main foundation of their hypothesis, as far as I can learn, lies in the way of pre-facing his sonship, as they apprehend it, in *Psal. ii. 7.* and of applying it to Christ in the new testament. They plead that his sonship is spoken of in that *Psalm*, as the result of a decree. *I will declare the decree; the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.* And this, say they, is apply'd in *Acts xiii. 32, 33.* to the resurrection of Christ, which was the great proof of his being the Messiah, or the Son of God; accordingly it is apply'd in *Heb. i. 5.* and *v. 5.* to his mediatorial office. And these are the only places, where it is cited in the new Testament.

But, admitting that this decree relates to God's saying, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*, it may very well be understood as respecting, not the *original*, but the *evidence* and *declaration* of his sonship. God the Father had decreed that it should be remarkably demonstrated, or manifested by his resurrection from the dead; and therefore the apostle applies it to that great event in the foremention'd *Acts xiii. 32, 33.* *We declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise*
which

which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfill'd the same to us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second Psalm, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.* But he was the Son of God before this; and therefore in another place he is said, not to be made or constituted, but declared to be the Son of God ^{Rom. i. 3.} with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, ^{4.} by the resurrection from the dead, in opposition to what he was as the seed of David according to the flesh: His resurrection was the highest demonstration, that he was indeed the Son of God, as he had often asserted himself to be; for otherwise, after he had been crucify'd through weakness, he would ^{2 Cor. xiii.} never have lived again by the power of God. ^{4.} And it was an equal demonstration, that he was the Son of God, partaking of the same divine nature and essential properties with the Father, if by the Spirit of holiness we understand, as some do, his divine nature; because he thereby raised himself from the dead. Accordingly he spoke of his resurrection as his own act, and as what he performed by his own power. *Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.* He ^{John ii.} spake of the Temple of his body. And at another time, *I lay down my life, that I might* ^{19, 21. and x. 17.} *take it again. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.*

But, after all, why may not the Preface in the second Psalm, viz. *I will declare the de-*

Psal. ii. 8.

cree, relate to what follows in the next verse, *Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession?* This is without all dispute the object of a divine decree: and the words, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*, may be consider'd as a parenthesis, to specify the person concern'd in this decree, and to intimate the Father's great delight in him and approbation of him, as fit for, and worthy of the high trust and revenue he had decreed to him. The *decree* relates to a futurity; but *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*, expresses something already existent; and therefore to refer the decree to this, makes the language not so natural, as to refer it to God's giving his Son the heathen for his inheritance, &c. And it is observable, that tho' the words, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*, are three times quoted in the new Testament, they are never quoted with this preface, as if his sonship were the matter of a decree. In this light we may take the quotation of them in *Acts* xiii. 32, 33. to carry this sense, "God hath raised up Jesus again, and thereby given testimony to his being the promised Messiah. It hereby appears that he, who called himself the Son of God, is that Messiah, as it is also written, to describe him, in the second Psalm, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.*"

Another place where this passage is cited, is *Heb.* i. 5. *To which of the angels said he at*

any time, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?* Here I humbly conceive it is brought in to set out the original dignity of the Person of Christ above the angels, according to the grand design of this chapter, as an introduction to the glory and perfection of his priesthood. And tho' the following words in the close of the verse, *And again I will be a Father to him, and he shall be my Son*, should be supposed to have a reference to his office-capacity; yet there is no necessity that the foregoing words, which are stronger and more emphatical, should be confin'd to the same reference. For as these are quotations of different texts, that were spoken on different occasions, why may they not be apply'd to Christ under different considerations of him, by which he appears to be superior to the angels, and the foundation of which lies in his eternal relation to the Father, as his only begotten Son? One of these testimonies may relate to his original dignity as the Son; and the other to the Father's peculiar love and care of him as Mediator, that he would treat him as a father treats his son; and both are proper proofs of his superiority to the angels. But to keep up the governing view of his original dignity, as the eternal Son of God, which shines through all his office, and is the foundation of all his glory in the discharge of it, the Apostle immediately proceeds in the following verses to the twelfth verse, to represent

sent him under distinguishing characters of Deity, as the object of the worship of angels; as God, whose throne is for ever and ever; and as that Jehovah that laid the foundation of the earth, and remains unchangeably the same.

The last place where this text is cited, and apply'd to Christ, is *Heb. v. 5.* where it is said, *Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee.* Some suppose it is hereby intimated, that Christ became our high-priest by God's saying this to him; or because he said to him, *Thou art my Son, &c.* But I can see no connection in the words to lead us to this sense. It seems most natural to suppose that they are only descriptive of the person constituting, and of the person constituted in this office, *viz.* the eternal Father, and his eternal Son. Hence,

Prop. III. This title hath a reference to Christ's divine pre-existent nature, or to his intrinsic eternal relation to the Father in the Godhead.

I take the *Son of God* to be a title originally founded in a necessary eternal generation, which is peculiar to him, and altogether above our conception as to the manner of it; but according to which he is and always was partaker of the same nature, and essential perfections with the Father, personally distinguished from him, and necessarily co-existent with him. And as the Son of God

is

is that divine person of the sacred Three, that was to be the Messiah, this title is often used to characterize him as such, in testimony of his Deity, and in distinction from the Father and Spirit. Hence it was exceeding proper that this title should be solemnly declared at his *incarnation*, when he was to enter upon the discharge of his glorious office; and at his *resurrection*, when he had finished the work his Father gave him to do upon earth; and it was as proper, that he should be commonly known and distinguished *all along* by it, when he is spoken of as the *Christ*; because his divinity was essential to the discharge of his office, and was manifested by it.

He was called *the Son of God* at his birth, for the same reason as he was called *Emmanuel*, *God with us*, to imitate his divine dignity, and what a mighty Saviour he should be. But this was no more the original of his being *the Son*, than it was of his being *God*. It was only a declaration of his title, which he had a divine right to before, in like manner as God's order, that *all the angels should worship him*, at his *bringing him into the world*, was a declaration of his being the proper object of their worship, which he really was, and had a divine right to be before. Mat. i. 23. Heb. i. 6.

He was likewise *declared to be the Son of God*, by his *resurrection from the dead*. But this could not be to *begin* a title, which he unquestionably had before. It was only to attest the truth of that title, as it appeared in the Rom. i. 4.

the divine power by which he raised himself, and in his Father's owning him to be, what he had often called himself, *the Son of God*; and to assure us of the infinite dignity and acceptableness, that his divine person gave to the sacrifice he had offered to take away sin.

And his being so *often* characterized as *the Son of God*, when he was spoken of as the Messiah, is no more an argument against his having that title on the account of his divine nature; than his being so *often* characterized as the *Son of Man*, when at other times he was spoken of as the Messiah, is an argument against his having that title on the account of his partaking of the true nature of man. Tho' the *Son of God*, the *Son of Man*, the *King of Israel*, and *the Christ*, were promiscuously used for one another; yet they were not merely exegetical of each other, without any variation of the idea. They were indeed distinguishing appellations or denominations of the same person: so that he, who was the Son of God, and the Son of Man, was the Messiah, and the King of Israel, and *vice versa*. But the Son of God, and the Son of Man, were denominations of him from his *divine* and *human* natures; and the Christ, and the King of Israel, from his *office*.

It is freely allow'd that the distinct manner of the divine subsistences, and consequently the eternal generation of the Son, and their relations *ad intra* are inconceivable, and infinitely above all that we are acquainted with;
and

and all imperfection must be removed from them. But unless there are eternal intrinsic relations between them, by which they are distinct persons, irrespective to oeconomicall actings, *Sabellianism* is unavoidable. And if the *Father*, *Son*, and *Spirit*, are not terms that the scripture uses to express those relations, I know no others that bid so fair for it; and at length, perhaps, the relations themselves may come to be call'd only oeconomicall. It therefore seems necessary to consider these distinctive titles, as names belonging to, and expressive of their original relations to each other, that we may keep up the idea of their real eternally necessary and distinct subsistences in the one undivided Godhead. And while these relations, and consequently the generation of the Son, are considered as *absolutely necessary* and *eternal*, they neither can be proved to be impossible, or inconsistent with the independency and necessary subsistence of the Son in the self-existent Godhead.

Nor can I see any incongruity in supposing that the scripture represents Christ, as *the Son of God*, sometimes when his original nature is spoken of *absolutely*, and at other times when he is spoken of in his office capacity. Nay, there seems to be a necessity that his titles originally divine, should be sometimes mentioned with relation to his office, that we may know what a great and glorious Messiah we have. How else should it appear with full and proper evidenc, that he is *God manifested in the flesh*? 2 Tim. iii.

And if but one instance can be found, where this title hath no relation to his office, that one instance will be a sufficient proof, that it belongs to his original nature.

Having thus settled the sense or meaning of this title, the next thing that lies before us is to

2. Offer something to support this sense; Or Shew that more is intended by this title, the Son of God, than a denomination of him as Mediator, or as born of the virgin, and proved to be the Messiah by his resurrection from the dead; and that therefore it must have a reference to his divine pre-existent nature, or to his intrinsic eternal relation to the Father in the Godhead. To evince this, let us consider the following things,

(1.) *His generation is eternal.*

Prov. viii.
22, 24,
25, 30.

The Lord possessed him in the beginning of his ways before his works of old. When there were no depths, before the mountains were settled; before the hills, was he brought forth. Then he was by him, as one brought up with him, like a Son in the Bosom of his Father.

Jer. 3, 2.

And this is intermingled with an account of eternal covenant-transactions between the Father and him, and of his being set up from everlasting as Mediator and Head of the church, to shew that he was then really subsisting with the Father, and therefore was capable of bearing a part in those eternal settlements. But there seems to be a plain difference between the terms, *brought forth*, and *set up*. The first may well enough agree to the peculiar manner of

of his subsistence, and the other to his office. In a different nature from that, in which he was born at *Bethlehem*, * *his goings or com-* Mic. v. 2.
ings forth have been from of old, from ever-
lasting, or from the Days of eternity. The expressions are the same that are used in scripture to express the eternity of the Father himself. And why may not his goings forth, in what is call'd an eternal generation, be here opposed to his birth of the virgin, according to the flesh? They have been perpetual like the rays of the sun (as the ancients loved to express themselves) co-eternal with the Father, without beginning or end, and never separated from him.

Hence his generation is spoken of as a permanent thing, of which it ever hath been, is, and will be said, *This day have I begotten thee*, Psal. ii. 7.

• **וְיָצָא מִן־בֶּטְלֶהֶם** A learned critick observes upon this place, that 1. The act of *coming forth* is express'd as *eternally acting*. The verbal noun implies the present; the other words, *that present to be eternal*. 2. The word **וְיָצָא** found only here, is from **יָצָא** used Gen. xxv. 25. to express that action of the infant at his birth, which brings him into the world. *When Rebecca's days to be deliver'd were fulfill'd — and she first came out* **וַיֵּצֵא**. And also for the son of Abraham's coming from his own bowels, Gen. xv. 4. — 3. The personal Properties and natural unity of the Father and the Son are here sufficiently expressed; the subsistence of each is complete, tho' the nature of both is but one. — He, whose *comings out are from eternity*, cannot be the Father, from whom he is *eternally coming forth*. And 4. The act being only *acting*, not *acted*, does not imply a *derived nature*, a *divided nature*, a *caused nature*; or any nature in any respect different from the Father's nature. The true scripture doctrine of the holy Trinity, by Mr. Nelson's friend, p. 83, 84.

or, as it has been render'd, *I am this day begetting thee*, to denote an eternal abiding, unbeginning, and never ending act †. Hence

(2.) *He is so begotten of the Father as to be of the same nature with him.*

The very first notion of sonship in any proper sense suggests this: And there is an ap-

† The Hebrew is *אני אתך היום ילדתיך* and should be render'd *Jehovah hath said to me, thou art my Son, I am this day generating thee.* For, (1.) That which can be *now* said to be done *this day*, and might be so said *yesterday*, and may be so said to *morrow*, and so on from eternity to eternity, if it could be spoken of any human act, would determine such act to be always acting, never acted; and therefore would oblige us to alter the expression and say, *doing* in the present, instead of *done* in the preter tense. And therefore since this is spoken here of an *eternal Being*, since God himself said *so long since*, and *still* saith, and always *will* say, — *I — this day* — even the meanest capacity will agree, that whatever act this is, which is thus spoken of, must be *always acting*, never *acted*, and therefore that the word, denoting this action, ought to be express'd in the present tense, and not in the preter, *I am this day generating thee.* (2.) This is according to the *Hebrew idiom*, which has no present tense, but expresses it, sometimes by the preter, and sometimes by the future. And accordingly the new version of the Bible, *Psal. i. 1.* renders *לך* in the preter by *walketh* in the present tense. And *Solomon* says of himself *Ecc. i. 12.* *I the preacher* *לך* in the preter, for *am* king in *Jerusalem* in the present tense. (3.) And this the *Rabbins* themselves allow. See *Aben Ezra* on *Psal. i.* and on *Job iii. 2.* and *Sal Jarchi* on *Gen. xxiv. 25.* and *Elias Levita* in *Hab. bachur. Orat. i. Fund. 4.* — Now hence we must infer, 1. That there is in the Deity, *Father and Son*, two distinct persons, each completed by his proper subsistence; the Father is generating the Son; the Son is receiving his generation from the Father. 2. This act (if I may call it an act) being said to be *acting*, not *acted*, we cannot hence infer that the nature of the Father is divided, or another nature produc'd. And consequently, the Son of God, with respect to this generating, cannot be said to be a *divided Being*. 3. That the *Father and Son* in the Deity are *co-eternal* and *equally self-existent* and *independent.* Ibid. p. 81, 82, 83.

parent

parent agreement between the notions of necessary *emanation* from the Father, and *sameness of nature*; and between *generation*, and a proper *sonship* answerable to it. But I can see no such agreement in the ideas of *constitution in office* and *sonship*, or of *generation* and *mediatorship*, that one of these should be expressive of, or merely relative to the other. Nor can I see any thing in the Notions of *judge* and *surety*, of *Lawgiver* and *Redeemer*, of the *offended party* and *Mediator*, that answers the ideas of relation between *father* and *son*. Nor do I find that office-characters usually denote any thing like filiation, or that they are ever used in scripture to intimate, that the persons that bear them are the sons of God on that account; except in one instance, which shall be consider'd anon.

The *angels* are call'd the sons of God, because they derive their beings from him, and bear his likeness, but never because they are put into high and eminent offices by him. And *believers* are called the sons of God, because they are spiritually begotten of him, and receive a *divine nature* that resembles him, ² Pet. i. and because they are adopted into his family ⁴ by means of their union with his own eternal Son: But *ministers* never bear that name on the account of their constitution in office, which shews that the appellation relates to persons irrespective to office.

Indeed *magistrates* are once called *the children of the most High*, on the account of their ^{Psal.} ^{lxxxii. 6.} office :

office: But they are likewise call'd *gods* in the same verse and context on the same account, which shews that these are used as terms of the same import in that place; and that they are call'd the *children of the most High* on no other account, and in no other sense than that in which they are called *gods*. And if this is allow'd in the highest sense of the terms, *Son* and *God*, with respect to Christ, (as he intimates it ought to be in his discourse on this passage in *John* x. 34, 35, 36.) we must either own that the term, *God*, when used of him, is only a denomination of him as the Messiah; or else that the term, *Son of God*, is a denomination of him as partaking of the divine nature.

If in the common use of language with relation to intelligent beings, the term, *Son*, always signifies one of the same *nature* with his Father; and if in the lower and more improper use of the title, *sons of God*, there is usually a respect to the god-like *nature* of those that bear it, and not to their office: It seems reasonable to suppose that, when Christ is call'd the *only begotten Son*, and the *Son of God*, by way of eminence and peculiarity in the highest and properest sense that the expressions, speaking of God after the manner of men, can admit of, it should relate not to his office, but to his *nature*, which he has in common with the Father.

Hence, his being so begotten of the Father, as to be of the same nature with him, may be strongly argued from his being the *only begotten*
son

the Son, and that Son who is one with the
 Father, *I and my Father are one.* He is so John 2.
 essentially one with him, that he *that hath* 30.
seen the Son, hath seen the Father also. For Chap. xiv.
he is in the Father, and the Father in him; 9, 10.
 and he is that Son, *who is the brightness of his* Heb. 1. 2,
glory, and the express image of his person. He 3.
 call'd the Father his own proper Father (*πατήρ* John v.
αἰδιον) thereby making himself equal with God, 18.
 as the Jews rightly understood him. He was
 the Father's own proper Son (*τὸν ἰδιον υἱόν*) and
 the Son of himself (*τὸν ἑαυτοῦ υἱόν*) in opposition Rom. viii.
 to sons by adoption, spoken of in that con- 3, 5 & 17.
 text. And he is the Son of the living God, and Mat. xvi.
 the Son of the Father in truth and love, truly 16.
 partaking of his nature and beloved of him. 2 John 3.
 What do all those, and several other Scriptures
 of the like strain mean, but that the title is not
 to be taken in an improper and distantly me-
 taphorical sense; but in as proper and natural
 a sense as possibly can be, to express the same-
 ness of his nature with the Father, or to de-
 note that he is such a Son as naturally pro-
 ceeds from, or is begotten of the Father, in
 distinction from all others, who are sons by
 creation, or by free adoption, or by regene-
 rating grace? Hence,

(3.) *Properties and prerogatives, peculiar to*
the divine nature, are ascribed in their highest
strains to Christ, as the Son of God.

The divine nature carries all its essential
 perfections along with it; and eternity of ex-
 istence has already been shewn to belong to
 Christ,

Christ, as the Son. *Self sufficiency, sovereignty, omnipotence, and omniscience*, are likewise ascribed to him, and *divine worship* is order'd to be paid him, under the character of the Son. He, like the Son of the living God, *has life in himself, as the Father has life in himself: He quickens whom he will. The Father sheweth him all Things that himself doth*, nothing can be hid from his intuitive all-comprehending mind, *What things soever the Father doth, these also doth the Son likewise*, in the same godlike way, and with the same absolute power; nothing is too hard for him to do: And *all men must honour the Son, even as they honour the Father*. When he was on earth, devils trembled before him, and his disciples worshipped him, as the Son of God. And after he went to heaven, he spoke of himself under the title, as *he (viz. the Jehovah of the old testament) who searcheth the reins and hearts; and will give unto every one according to their works. These things saith the Son of God*. These and several other most magnificent ascriptions are made to him under this title. And tho' some of them may be mentioned with a peculiar reference to the discharge of his mediatorial office; yet it is to be observed, that they are things peculiar to Deity; and the highest character under which he is represented, when they are ascribed to him, is *the Son of God*. 'Tis as such that he is capable of them, and has an original right to them. And if this exalted title by which

John v.
19, 20,
23, 26.

Mat. viii.
29. and
xiv. 33.

Rev. ii.
18, 23.

he is spoken of, when these and such like high ascriptions of divine prerogatives are made to him, respects only his mediatorship; this would suggest as if they were all to be resolved into the lofty delegated powers of the Mediator. And then what becomes of his original dignity, which alone in truth can support them? Hence,

(4.) *Other names, that originally belong to his divine nature are sometimes used, as well as that of the Son of God, with peculiar relation to his being the Messiah.*

Jehovah is an essential name of the only true God. *Thou, whose name alone is Jehovah,* ^{Psal.} *art the most high God over all the earth.* And ^{lxxxiii. 13,} this is apply'd to Christ, with respect to his office or mediatorship. *Surely shall one say in* ^{Isa. xiv.} *the Lord (Heb. Jehovah) have I righteousness* ^{24, 25.} *and strength? In the Lord (Heb. Jehovah)* ^{Jer. xxiii.} *shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall* ^{5.} *glory.* And this is his name whereby he shall be call'd *the Lord (Heb. Jehovah) our righteousness.* How glorious must the righteousness be, which the church has in him!

In like manner *the Lord* in the new testament, which answers to *Jehovah* in the old, is often denominative of Christ in his office-capacity. He is in his original nature Lord of all things, as the God that made them: But he is likewise in his mediatorial-capacity in human nature *made both Lord and Christ.* And yet ^{Aa. ii. 36.} he is never said to be *made* the Son of God; which carries this title higher than that, as

E

more

more peculiarly appropriated to his Deity than that.

Now as these titles are, in the first and original application to him, denominations of his divine nature, and yet are apply'd to him with respect to his being the Messiah; why may not *the Son of God* be a denomination of his divine nature, as the second person in the Godhead; tho' it is also apply'd to him with respect to that office? Or why should his being order'd to be *called* the Son of God, with regard to his birth of the virgin, be any more an argument against his really being so, on the account of his divine subsistence in the Godhead, than his being order'd to be *call'd* Jehovah, our righteousness, with regard to his everlasting mediatorial righteousness, is an argument against his being really Jehovah, on the account of his divine nature? Who, that owns the Divinity of Christ, must not say, that *Jehovah our righteousness* is a title originally founded in his divine nature, and could not be apply'd to him, unless he were God? Why then should we not also say, that *the Son of God* is a title originally founded in his being eternally begotten of the Father, and could not be apply'd to him, with such peculiarity and eminence, unless he were so begotten of him? Hence,

(5.) *The Son absolutely, or the Son of God, and the Son of man, are titles of opposite signification, when apply'd to Christ.*

Mat. i. 23. Christ is a complex person God-man; *Emmanuel; God with us; God manifested in the flesh:*

flesh: He came of the fathers, as concerning 1 Tim. iii.
the flesh, who is over all God blessed for ever. 16.

And as the *Son of Man* is a denomination of Rom. ix. 5.
the Messiah from his inferior nature, to shew
that he was truly man: So *the Son of God* is a
denomination of the same Messiah from his
superior nature, to shew that he is as truly God.
And the *child born*, mention'd in Isa. ix. 6.
seems plainly to me to be rather *distinguish'd*
from the *Son given*, than, as some have ap-
prehended, to be *exegetical* of it. For other-
wise the sonship would relate immediately, if
not restrictively, to the human nature (which
I suppose they will not assert) since the *child*
born apparently doth so.

The terms *Man*, and *Son of Man* are us'd
promiscuously for each other in their applica-
tion to Christ, as expressive of his *human nature*.
Hence in his discourse with the *Jews* he said,
When ye have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall John viii.
ye know that I am he; and in a following verse, 28, 40.
Now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you
the truth. He was a *Man* approv'd of God; Acts ii.
and of the fruit of David's loins, according to the 22, 30.
flesh. And as at one time it is said, that God will chap. xvii.
judge the world in righteousness by that Man, 31.
whom he hath ordain'd: So at another we are
told, that *he hath given him authority to exe-* John v. 27.
cute judgment, because he is the Son of man.

On the other hand, the terms *God*, the *Word*,
and *the Son of God* are promiscuously used for
one another in their application to Christ, as ex-
pressive of his *Deity*. As the Father said to him,

Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee:
 Heb. i. 5. *So to the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is*
 8. *for ever and ever.* And as God was said to
 Gal. iv. 4. *send forth his Son, made of a woman, made un-*
 John i. 14. *der the law; so the Word was said to be made*
flesh and dwell among us. The Son is as plain-
 ly distinguish'd from that, which was *made of a*
woman, in one of these passages, as the *Word* is
 from the *flesh*, which he was made, in the other:
 And Christ was as truly the *Son*, before he was
 made of a woman, as he was the *Logos*, or
Word, before he was made flesh.

Hence the evangelist *John* spoke of Christ
 as God, as *the Word*, and as *the Son of God*, with-
 out any mark of distinction, as if some of these
 appellations belong to his divine nature, and
 John i. 1, the other to his mediatorial office. *In the be-*
 14, 18. *ginning was the Word, — and the Word was*
God. The Word was made flesh and dwelt
among us; and we beheld his glory, the glory,
as of the only begotten of the Father. And *No*
man hath seen God at any time; the only begot-
ten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he
hath declared him.

Christ's being in *the bosom of the Father*
 seems to be a description of him from his es-
 sential inbeing in the Father, as his Son. Ac-
 cordingly he speaks of himself as the Son, when
 he speaks of this inbeing, and of the essenti-
 al oneness that is between the Father and him,
 saying, *I and my Father are one.* And this is
 chap. x. 30. just the same form of speech as is used, when
 he is call'd the *Logos*, or the *Word*, and is
 distinguish'd,

distinguish'd, as a divine subsistent, from the Father and holy Ghost. *There are three that* ^{1 John v.} *bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word,⁷ and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one.* And as in this passage Christ is distinguish'd, as a divine person, from the Father and Holy Ghost, under the character of the *Word*; so ^{Matthew xxviii. 19.} he is distinguish'd from them, under the character of the *Son*, in the form of baptism, wherein the one God of the Christian religion is set out, as the author and object of it, by whose authority we are baptiz'd, and to whom we are devoted, as baptiz'd in their *name*.

Furthermore, as to the terms *God* and *Son of God*, when the *Jews* charged Christ with blasphemy, for *making himself God*, his defence issues in an assertion, that he was *the Son of God*. John x. 33, — 36. When *Thomas* confessed his faith in him, *saying to him, my Lord and my God*; *This was written that* ^{John xx. 28, 31.} *we might believe that Jesus is not only the Christ, but also the Son of God.* And the Apostle *John's* elaborate proof that *he is the Son of God*, issues in an assertion, that he is *the true God*. 1 John v. 5, — 20. Hence,

(6.) *The Son of God is a title most frequently and remarkably used by the apostle John, who wrote not so much to prove that Jesus is the Messiah, as that he is God.*

The ancients tell us that * “ he wrote his gospel against *Cerintus*, and the heresy of

* Dr. *Whitby's* preface to this gospel.

the *Ebionites*, who held that our Lord was a mere man, and therefore spoke of his divine original. The other evangelists having written the series of our Lord's generation according to the flesh, he wrote a spiritual gospel beginning from the Divinity of Christ. And † very probably in his epistles as well as gospel (which were not wrote long after one another) he had a particular respect to the *heresies* then growing up, namely of *Cerintus*, and the *Ebionites*, who as they denied the Divinity of our Saviour, so also denied any divine sonship, antecedent to the birth of the virgin."

Now, of all the inspir'd writers, none spoke so frequently and remarkably of Christ, under the titles of *the Son* and *Son of God*, as this apostle. They are darling phrases with him, he delights much in them, and uses them above fifty times. If therefore these were appellations of Christ, merely relating to his human nature, or to his mediatorship, it did not so well serve his grand design to abound with a sort of peculiarity, as he did, in the use of

† Dr. *Waterland's* sermons, p. 210, 211. These authors have collected several Testimonies to this purpose from *Jerome*, *Clemens of Alexandria*, *Irenaeus*, and *Tertullian*, and referr'd to *Eusebius*; but have not quoted his words, which stand thus. Ἐκότεως δὲ ἂν τὴν μὲν τῆς σαρκὸς τῷ σωτῆρι ἡμῶν χροιαλογία, ὡς Ματθαίῳ καὶ Λουκᾷ προσημασμένοι, ἀποσιωπήσῃ τὸν Ἰωάννην. τῆς δὲ θεολογίας ἀπαρξασθαι, ὡς ἂν αὐτῷ πρὸς τοῦ θείου πνεύματος οἱ κριτικοὶ παραπισχυλαγμένης. *Euseb. Eccles. Hist. Lib. 3. cap. 24.* Τὸν μόνον Ἰωάννην ἔχοντα συνιδόντα ὅτι πᾶσα μαθητικά ἐν τοῖς εὐαγγελίοις διδύλαται. ἀντραπέντα ὑπὸ τῶν γνηρίμων, πνεύματι θεοφωρῶντα πνευματικὴν ποιῆσαι εὐαγγέλιον. *Ibid. Lib. 6. cap. 14.*

them.

them. But if they are denominations relating to his original nature as God, nothing could better promote that design, and keep up our thoughts to it, than his so frequently speaking of him under those names. Hence,

(7.) *The Son of God is a title given to Christ, both antecedently to his incarnation, and irrespectively to his office, or to any works that belong to him as Mediator.*

Agur, speaking of the omnipotence, majesty, and incomprehensibleness of God, represents his name, and his Son's name, as equally unsearchable, *Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? Who hath gather'd the winds in his fist? Who hath bound up the waters in a garment? Who hath establish'd all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and what is his Son's name, if thou canst tell?* He speaks of both their names as alike inexplicable, which I conceive is true, not of the name of God, and of Christ consider'd merely as the Messiah; but only of both these ineffable persons, Father and Son, consider'd in their divine nature, and original relation to each other. And he speaks of omnipotent performances in the creation, preservation, and government of the world, which are common to the Father and Son; but can relate to the Son only as he is a divine person, the same in nature with the Father, who made the worlds by him, and by whom all things consist.

Hence we are told, that *God hath spoken to us by his Son, by whom also he made the worlds,* ^{Heb. i. 2,}
and

and who upholdeth all things by the word of his power. And at another time he is called the Son, by whom all things were created, —
 Col. i. 13, 16, 17. who is before all things, and by whom all things consist. Works of nature are likewise ascrib'd to him under the title of the Son, when he says, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work; that is, he and I are, and always have been, co-equal workers in the whole of creation and providence: And whatever things he (the Father) doth, these also doth the Son likewise. These works of nature, at least the works of creation, were perform'd by him, not as the Messiah, but as God. And as these have no relation to his actings as the Messiah; so if his title, the Son, relates only to his office, 'tis strange that works of nature should be so commonly ascrib'd to him under this denomination; and that some other term expressive of the divine nature, should not be used on such occasions, as I don't find they are so frequently as this of the Son.

But to draw to a conclusion of this part of our work.

(8.) This title, the Son of God, is distinguish'd from the Christ, or from the office-consideration of him.

Thus we have already seen it is distinguished in our text. The Apostle preached Christ, that he is the Son of God. Thus it is distinguished in the apostle Peter's confession of him, when to the questions, Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am? and whom say ye that I am?

Mat. xvi.
13—16.

I am? The answers were, *Some say thou art John the Baptist, some Elias, and others Jeremiah, or one of the Prophets. And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God. q. d. "Thou art neither John the Baptist, nor Elias, nor any one of the Prophets; but the very Christ: And thou art more than the Son of Man; thou art the Son of God. Thou art God as well as man."* Upon this Christ pronounced him *blessed, in as much as flesh and blood had not revealed it to him; but his Father, who is in heaven.* And thus the terms are distinguished in the *Eunuch's* confession of his faith, saying, *I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.* Ver. 17.
Acts viii.
37.

In the epistle to the *Hebrews*, the apostle opposes the character of Christ, as a Son, to that of a servant, in the preference he gives to him above *Moses*, saying, *Moses verily was faithful in all his house as a servant.* — *But Christ, as a Son over his own house.* This carries the notion of his sonship higher than his office. For Christ as Mediator was his Father's servant, *Behold, says he, my servant whom I uphold.* If therefore the Son signifies only the Mediator, or is but another name precisely of the same import with that, *son* and *servant* are terms that can't be opposed with just propriety to each other. Tho' the apostle here speaks of the Mediator, yet he speaks of him under a divine character, as the Son of God; or as the God, *that built all things,* Heb. iii. 4. as 'tis expressed in the next foregoing verse to these.

At another time we are told, in opposition to men who were high-priests under the law, that the Son was made an high-priest, and
 Chap. vii. 28. *was consecrated to that office by an oath. For the law maketh men high-priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, that is, maketh the Son an high-priest, who is consecrated for evermore.* The Son is here said to be made an high-priest by the word of the oath. He was the Son before he was made an high-priest: And his sonship is plainly distinguished from his priesthood, unless we will say, that he was an high-priest, before he was made an high-priest.

Once more, it is said of Christ, that *tho'*
 Chap. v. 8 *he were a Son; yet learned he obedience by the things that he suffer'd.* If his being the Son denotes only his being the Messiah, whose office as such was to suffer and die for sinners, there seems to be no sense in saying, *tho'* he were a Son, he learn'd obedience by sufferings. For that is, as if the apostle should say, *tho'* it was his work as a Son to learn obedience by sufferings, yet he learned obedience by sufferings. Or *tho'* he was the Messiah, yet he did the business of the Messiah. But if his being the Son relates to his eternal Godhead, there is room for a *tho'* and *yet*, the sense runs clear, and there is strength and beauty in the particles. *Tho'* he was infinitely exalted in himself as the Son of God; yet he stooped so infinitely low in his office, as to submit to the most

most trying instances of obedience in human nature. Tho' he was the Son of God, who thought it not robbery to be equal with God; yet he humbled himself so far as to take upon him the form of a servant, and in the performance of his mediatorial office in our nature, learned obedience by his sufferings, obedience unto death, even the death of the cross.

Thus we have gone thro' the considerations proposed to confirm the sense we have given of this title, the Son of God; and have purposely omitted, or less enlarged upon some things here, which I have formerly had occasion to take notice of in a set of * sermons published on the Godhead of Christ. Let us now proceed to,

II. Add a few words upon the *other* title mentioned in our text, and that is *Christ*.

This is evidently an office-character, which belongs to the Son of God. And as discourses on his office, as Mediator, are the peculiar province of another of my brethren in this collection of sermons, I shall but briefly touch upon it.

The word *Christ* in the *Greek*, answers to *Messiah* in the *Hebrew*, and is of the same import. Thus it is explain'd, where we are told of *Andrew's* words, saying, *We have* John i. 41. *found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.*

The Christ signifies the *Anointed*; and hath

* *Jesus Christ God-man*, on *Rom. ix. 5.* p. 175—191.

a reference to the anointing of the prophets, priests and kings among the Jews. The priests always, and the prophets and kings very often, were consecrated to their respective offices by anointing. And as our dear Lord is the great prophet, priest and king of the church, who was prefigur'd by them, that were anointed to those offices under the law; so he, by way of eminence, is the Christ, the anointed of God.

All these offices were united and rais'd to their utmost perfection and glory in him; and
 Pl. xlv. 7. his unction exceeded theirs. *He was anointed with the oyl of gladness above his fellows.* By his fellows may be meant those that have communion with him in his human nature, of office-characters, and benefits. His anointing was superior to that of any of the sons of men, with whom he was partaker of flesh and blood; it was superior to that of the prophets, priests and kings, who had gone before him; and to that of all Christians, who have an unction
 Rev. i. 6. with him, and from him, and are made kings and priests to God and his Father, in a spiritual sense thro' him.

He is fairer than the children of men; and
 Pl. xlv. 2. grace is poured into his lips. Or, as the Chaldee expounds it, * the spirit of prophecy was given into his lips. The Jewish prophets, priests and kings were anointed with material ceremonial oyl: For the Spirit of the Lord
 Isa. lx. 1. God was upon him, because the Lord anointed

* Vid. Ainsworth in loc.

him to preach good tidings to the meek, &c. Believers receive the Spirit, with his gifts and graces, according to the measure of the gift of ^{Eph. iv. 7.} Christ. But Christ himself received him without measure. ^{John iii. 34.} For God giveth not the Spirit by measure to him. And It pleased the Father, ^{Col. i. 18.} that all fulness should dwell in him, as he is ^{19.} the head of the body, the church.

The anointing upon him was like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down ^{Pf. cxxxiii. 2.} upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments. Hence it was the oyl of gladness; so call'd, as some have observed, from its effects. It makes all his ^{Pf. xlv. 8.} garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, as it follows in the next verse. It gives them a rich perfume, and diffuses health, vigour and joy, thro' all the members of his mystical body, who derive a holy unction from him. As oyl is an emblem of refreshment; so all spiritual delights come into the souls of believers from the anointing Spirit, who is their Comforter; and all their joy is the joy of the Holy Ghost.

Anointing to office, was a rite anciently used for several purposes. It was used as a signal of God's choice to office, as when David was chosen from among his brethren, the Lord said, *Arise, and anoint him; for this is he.* ^{1 Sam. xvi. 12.} It was used for consecration, as in the case of Aaron and his sons, when God said to Moses, *Thou shalt anoint them, and consecrate them, and sanctify them, that they may minister* ^{Exod. xxviii. 41.}

ter unto me in the priest's office. It was used for investiture, as when God said to Samuel, concerning Saul, *Thou shalt anoint him to be captain over my people Israel, that he may save my people out of the hands of the Philistines.* And it was used for qualifications to discharge the office, as when Samuel took the horn of oyl, and anointed David in the midst of his brethren, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him from that day forward. Accordingly, our blessed Lord's being anointed, signifies his being chosen and consecrated to, invested in, and qualified for his mediatorial office, which includes all the offices of a prophet, priest and king.

As the anointing relates to his election and consecration to office, and investiture in it, it terminates upon his whole person, God-man, He is God's elect, in whom his soul delighteth.

Pf. xlii. 1. He is the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.

Heb. vii. 28. And when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a Woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law.

Gal. iv. 4. Thus Christ glorified not himself, to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. But as the anointing relates to his qualifications or endowments by the Holy Ghost for his office, it terminates immediately and only on his human nature; with regard to which it is said, that God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and with power; who went about doing good, and

Act. x. 38.

and healing all that were oppressed with the devil; for God was with him.

His divine nature needed no anointing to fit it for the discharge of his office; nor was capable of any such additional assistance for it. But his human nature needed it, and was capable of it.

Indeed the Son himself could easily have furnished his human nature for all the work to which he was called, by virtue of his personal union with the man Jesus; for thereby *all the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in him* Col. ii. 9. *bodily.* But as the Holy Spirit was to bear his part in the glory of our salvation; and in order thereunto, the human nature of Christ was form'd in the womb of the virgin by the *overshadowing* of his power, which was the *power of the Highest*; it was proper that he should have the glory of enriching that nature which he had formed, with all the gifts and assistances that were necessary for the service for which he had formed it. And as Christ came on his Father's commission, and was sent by him to do his work and will; and he by the Spirit had *prepared him a body* for that purpose; it was proper that he should give him all furniture by the same Spirit for the work to which he sent him. For *who goes a warfare any time at his own charges?* And in this way of procedure, he gave testimony to Christ's authority, and to his approbation of him in his office, as it hereby appeared that *God was with him.* Luke i. 35. Heb. x. 5. 1 Cor. ix. 7. Acts x. 38.

This

This œconomy of things relating to the Messiah's work, called for the anointing of the Holy Ghost, to qualify his human nature for it; and therefore the scripture represents it in this manner. And yet as all the operations of the divine persons *ad extra*, or out of the divine nature, are common to the Father, Son and Spirit; so what the Father and Spirit did herein, was done by the Son likewise, and his own Divinity shone thro' the man in his office-work. They were all jointly concurrent in it; and the power of the one only Godhead, was the principle of the whole furniture. This distinct way of personal acting in this œconomy, keeps up an evidence of the distinct personality of the Father, Son and Spirit. And this unity of principle in the operation, leads us to conceive of them as one God.

Thus we have gone through what might be needful on the two characters, by which our blessed Lord is described in our text. A few *practical reflections* shall close this discourse.

REFLECTIONS.

I. *How amazing are the riches of divine love!*

The Son of God himself is become our Saviour. *In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live thro'*

1 John iv.
8, 9.

thro' him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. The Father's giving his own Son to save us, is a higher instance of love, than if he had given all the angels in heaven. To give such a Son, the Son of his own nature and perfections, his only begotten Son, the Son of his dearest love and delights; to give him for us, and to give him up to all the terrors that divine justice, and the powers of darkness could inflict upon him, to redeem us, was as far as his love could go. Because he could give us nothing greater, he gave us his Son; and we may well conclude with the apostle, *He that spared* ^{Rom. viii.} *not his own Son, but deliver'd him up for us* ^{32.} *all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*

And how surprizing was the love of this Son of God himself, that he who was the Son in the bosom of the Father, infinitely possessed of equal perfections, glory and blessedness with him, so that nothing could be added to them, that he should nevertheless wave his prerogative, veil his glory in our nature, and freely become our Saviour! What astonishing wonders of grace are here, that he would make our nature personally his own, and then bleed, and groan, and die, and suffer all indignities and reproaches in that nature for such sinners as we are, for such as were of meaner rank than the angelick host, and for such as had injur'd and provok'd him;

G

as

as well as the Father! How are the praises of his love celebrated in the gospel on this account! *Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that tho' he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye thro' his poverty might be made rich.* He being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. And hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us. With what admiring rapture should we stand at the brink of the boundless ocean; and behold, embrace, and as far as possible comprehend, or rather apprehend, or take in (*καταλαβέσθαι*) with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge! With what holy amazement and adoring pleasure should we reflect upon all this! and what a joyful song should we raise to him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father! To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. Hence,

II. *What a divine Saviour is Christ!*

The Son of God is the usual title of the Messiah, to keep up exalted thoughts of him,

as God our Saviour, as possess'd of the same nature and essential perfection with the eternal Father. "In him all his Father shone substantially express'd," as * one finely represents it. His Divinity shone thro' all his office, and gave efficacy to all his saving work. It sheds its radiant lustre thro' the purchase, constitution, guidance, preservation, government, and salvation of the church. Who but God could be capable of managing and securing all its great concerns for time and eternity; or be worthy to wear the glory due to him for it? Hence,

III. *What a sufficiency and perfection must there be in his saving work?*

Had he been only the Son of man, it might have been said, inclusive of him as well as others: *Put not your trust in Princes, nor in the Son of man in whom there is no help.* ^{3.} *Psal. cxlvi.*

But he is the Son of God, as well as the Son of man, and therefore able for our help; and our hope in him is no less than a *hope in* ^{ver. 5.} *the Lord our God.* Nothing can be wanting in his undertakings or performances. Nothing of our own can ever be needful to complete the merit of his obedience and sufferings in our room and stead; and no defect can be found in his capacity of filling up any part of the important trust that is reposed in him.

We need no other Mediator between God and us; no other, to renew acquaintance,

* Milton's Paradise lost. B. iii. l. 139.

friendship, and correspondence between the parties, that were set at the utmost variance by sin; no other, to appease God's righteous resentments against us, and to overcome our unrighteous resentments against him; no other, to reconcile him to us, and us to him; no other, to render him accessible to us, or to introduce and recommend us to him, and to give us humble boldness before him; no other, to secure his rights and our happiness, or to obtain the eternal inheritance in a way worthy of God to bestow it, and to prepare us for it, and conduct us safe to the possession of it. Here a soul may safely venture it self and its eternal all without fear of a miscarriage.

2 Tim. i.
12.

And if we *know whom we have believed*, we may be well persuaded, *that he is able to keep that which we have committed to him, against the great day.* Hence,

IV. *How inexpressible is the happiness of being well affected toward him, and interested in him!*

John iii.
16, 36.

God so lov'd the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. And he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life. If our hearts are set right toward him by the faith of the operation of God; if our desires are after him, and our faith rests upon him; if we chuse and prefer him to all things else; and yield ourselves up to him, to be sav'd and govern'd by him, we may

may claim an interest in him : And *he that hath* ^{John v. 12.} *the Son hath life.* He hath begun his saving work upon us, and we may depend upon him for all that is further needful to compleat salvation. *The bruised reed shall he not break,* ^{Mat. xii. 20.} *and the smoking flax shall he not quench,* till he send forth judgment unto victory. Hear how he himself speaks of his sheep, *I give* ^{John x. 28, 29, 30.} *unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.* My Father, who gave them me, is greater than all, it can't be deny'd but that he must needs be greater than all that can be against them; and none, whether men or devils, *are able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.* And 'tis as impossible to pluck them out of my hand; for *I and my Father are one.* Their Divinity and power are one: Or they are one God, as the *Jews* understood him to mean, when for this saying, *they took up stones* ^{Ver. 31.} *to stone him, —because he made himself God.* ^{33.} Hence,

V. *How great is their danger that despise or neglect the Son of God!*

He that believeth not is condemn'd already, ^{John iii. 18, 16.} *because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.* And *he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.* There is no help or hope for them that reject him. His infinite dignity, as the Son of God, aggravates their crime; and his almighty power secures the punish-

Heb. x.
28, 29.

punishment. *He that despis'd Moses's law, dy'd without mercy. — Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath troden under foot the Son of God?*

How dost thou, O unbelieving impenitent sinner, that liest out from this glorious Saviour and throwest contempt upon him, how dost thou think thou canst be excused for thy disregards and affronts to the Son of God? Or how canst thou hope to escape his heavy resentments? He is as able to punish the disobedient, as to save the believing sinner. O therefore *kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.*

Psal. ii. 12.

The end of the first Sermon.

PREACHING

PREACHING CHRIST

EXPLAIN'D.

Acts ix, 20.

And straitway he preached Christ in the Synagogues, that he is the Son of God.

IN speaking to these words we have already consider'd the characters, that describe the subject of the apostle's ministry; and they are *Christ, the Son of God*. We now proceed to,

SERM. II.
preached
April 24.
1729.

Secondly, *Consider his preaching upon this subject*. He preached Christ, that he is the Son of God.

What is here recorded concerning the apostle *Paul* is for an example, or for our imitation; as well as for his commendation. It gives us a view of the great design of a gospel-ministry, and lays out the principal argument of the ministerial work in our days, as well as in his; unless we would preach another gospel than he preach'd. And therefore my design in treating upon it will lie in two things, with their application. We shall,

I. *Enquire what it is to preach Christ; or wherein it consists.* And then,

II. *Offer*

Preaching Christ explain'd.

II. Offer some considerations to recommend this preaching; or to shew why the ministers of the gospel should preach Christ.

I. Enquire what it is to preach Christ; or wherein preaching Christ consists.

The nature of our design in the former discourse confin'd our thoughts to the sense of the characters, under which our text speaks of the subject, that the apostle preached upon. This would not allow us to take so wide a compass as may be necessary to a just view of what goes into the work of preaching Christ. It may therefore be proper to lay out its *subject* a little more extensively. And then proceed to its *acts*.

1. As to the *subject* of this preaching, it is *Christ*.

And this may be consider'd with greater latitude, or restriction.

(1.) We may consider preaching Christ in a *latitude* of the expression.

Looking upon it in this view, it takes in the whole compass of Christian Religion, considered in its reference to Christ. It extends to all its noble improvements of natural light and principles; and to all its glorious peculiarities of the supernatural and incomprehensible kind, as each of these may be one way or other referred to him. In this sense there is no doctrine, institution, precept or promise; no grace, privilege, or duty toward God or man; no instance of faith, love, repentance

pentance, worship, or obedience, suited to the gospel-state, and to the design and obligations of the Christian religion, that don't belong to preaching Christ.

But to bring all these with any propriety under this denomination, they must be considered according to their respective natures or kinds, in their reference to Christ, that he may be interwoven with them, and appear to be concerned in them. They must be preach'd, not with the air of a heathen moralist or *Platonick* philosopher; but with the spirit of a minister of Christ, referring them up to him, as reveal'd or enjoin'd or purchased by him, as shining in their brightest lustres, and triumphing in all their glories thro' him, as built upon him, and animated by him, as lodg'd in his hands, *who is head over all things* Eph. i. 22. *to the church*, as standing in the connections, uses and designs, in which he hath placed them, as known, enjoy'd, or practis'd by light and grace derived from him, as to be accounted for to him, as acceptable to God, and advantageous to our salvation alone thro' him, by faith in him, as inforced upon us by motives and obligations taken from him, and as tending to his glory and the glory of God in him. Whatever is the immediate subject of the discourse, it may be call'd preaching Christ, if it is managed in such a manner as shews his concern in it, and leads our thoughts either to the glory of his person and offices, or to his kingdom of providence or grace, *as all things were created by* Col. i. 16,

H

him — 19.

him and for him, as he is before all things, and by him all things consist, as he is the head of the body, the church, the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence, and as it pleased the Father, that in him all fulness should dwell.

Ver. 27,
28, 29.

In this sense the apostles preached the riches of the glory of the mystery among the Gentiles, which was Christ in them, the hope of glory: warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that they might present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. Whereunto, says our apostle, I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily. They gave an evangelical turn to moral duties, and enforced them with a reference to Christ, and by considerations taken from him.

For a specimen of this you may observe the following instances of personal and relative duties, as enforced by the apostle Paul.

Rom. xiii.
13, 14.

As to the first of these, he says, Let us walk honestly as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof. Flee for-

1 Cor. vi.
18, 19, 19.

nication.— What, know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price; Therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. They that are Christ's, have crucify'd the flesh with the affec-

Gal. v.
24, 25.

Preaching Christ explain'd.

51

affections and lusts. If we live in the spirit, let us also walk in the spirit. This I say therefore and testify in the Lord, that ye walk not as other Gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind. But ye have not so learned Christ; if ^{Eph. iv. 17, — 32.} so be ye have heard him and been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus, that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renew'd in the spirit of your mind, &c.

And with regard to relative duties, he says, Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Walk in love as Christ ^{Chap. v. 2, 22 - 33.} also hath loved us. Wives, submit yourselves to your own Husbands, as unto the Lord, &c. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also lov'd the church, and gave himself for it, &c. Children, obey your parents in the Lord. Fathers, ^{Chap. vi. 1-9.} provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ: Not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, &c.

In like manner the apostle Peter urges moral duties with Christian arguments, saying, As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.—Forasmuch as ^{1 Pet. i. 15, 18.} ye know that ye were not redeemed with cor-

H 2

ruptible ^{19.}

Chap. ii.
9, 21,
22---24,

2 Pet.
5---8.

ruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation;—but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should shew forth the praises of him, who hath call'd you out of darkness into his marvellous light. And Christ hath left us an example that ye should follow his steps, who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who when he was revil'd, revil'd not again; when he suffer'd, he threatned not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness, by whose stripes ye were healed. And he exhorts them to add to their faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

'T would be to transcribe a great part of the apostolick writings to give you a full view of this strain of preaching Christ: how they intermingled the doctrines that peculiarly relate to him, as enforcing and evangelizing the duties, that have a foundation in natural light. In this latitude of the expression all their sermons and epistles were full of Christ. And after their example, Christ should triumph in all our discourses; His name should throw life and lustre upon all our holy ministrations. But,

(2.) We

(2.) We may consider preaching Christ more *restrictively*.

This may be call'd a more *direct* and *immediate* way of preaching him. And considering it in this light, it relates to the person and mediation of Christ, to the eternal counsels of God's will in him, and to the whole method of divine wisdom and grace in the salvation of sinners by him.

This direct preaching Christ is a noble and extensive province. It includes all that hath been, or that can be said of him, under the characters of *the Son of God*, and *the Christ*. It takes in the adorable constitution of his person, God-man, all the infinite perfections and condescensions of the God, and all the excellent qualifications, real properties, and sinless infirmities of the man. It takes in his equality with the Father in the divine nature, and subordination to him in the human nature and office-capacity; his personal and his relative glories, and the manifestation of the glory of all God's attributes in their utmost and harmonious splendors thro' him.

It takes in his peculiar and intire fitness for the redemption of the church; his Father's appointing him to it, and his own free acceptance of it, and engagements in eternal transactions with the Father about it; the visible appearances he made, as the Jehovah of *Israel* under the old testament; the promises and prophecies, types and figures, that were anciently given of him, and his coming in the
fulneſs

fulness of time to answer them ; his incarnation, life, obedience, sufferings, and death, in a humble state upon earth, to make an atonement for sin, and fulfill all righteousness ; and his resurrection, ascension and exaltation in all his glory at the Father's right hand in heaven, to apply and secure the merit of his blood.

It takes in all his royalties and advocacy, as a *priest upon his throne* ; his dominion over all, and his peculiar headship to the church, his love to them and care of them, his appearing in the presence of God for them, and sending his Spirit, to guide, sanctify, comfort and preserve them ; and his coming to raise the dead, and judge the world at the last day.

It further takes in all his offices, names, titles, and relations ; the tenor, settlement, and confirmation of the covenant of grace in him ; the way of obtaining forgiveness of sins, justification, and adoption, access to God, acceptance and communion with God thro' faith in him ; all the gracious influences and assistances he promises, and communicates in the way of his own appointment ; together with all the Benefits he hath purchas'd and bestows, all the obligations he hath laid upon us, and all the high and sacred regards of duty, gratitude, love and praise that he deserves and demands from us, in a life of faith in him, and holy obedience to him here, till he shall receive us to himself, to live with him in glory for ever.

This

Preaching Christ explain'd.

51

This is preaching Christ *directly*, and in the *restrictive* sense. And it is evident to an attentive mind, that 'tis this sort of *direct* preaching him, that is intended in our text, and in most of those other parts of the new testament, where the ministry of the gospel is characterised by it.

Thus, in our text it is call'd the apostle's preaching Christ, *that he is the Son of God*; and a little lower; his proving that this Son of God is *very Christ*, or the only true Messiah that was to come. At other times it is call'd preaching peace by Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all, whom God anointed with the Holy Ghost, who was slain and hanged on a tree, whom God raised up the third day; commanding his witnesses to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that thro' his name, whosoever believes in him, shall receive remission of sins. They preached Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but to them that are call'd, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. And they preached thro' Jesus the resurrection from the dead; and that he is become the head of the corner: neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

Acts i. 3

22. 12. 100

Chap. x.

36, 38-43.

1 Cor. i.

23, 24.

Acts ii. 11, 12.

Philip's text shews, that his preaching Christ to the *Eunuch*, was in the restrictive strain.

and

The

Chap. viii.
32-35.

The place of scripture which the Eunuch read, was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away, and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And who can doubt, but that the men of Cyprus and Cyrene made Christ the peculiar subject of their ministry, when they spake to the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus, and the hand of the Lord was with them; and a great number believed, and turned to the Lord?

Acts xi.
20, 21.

1 Tim. ii.
5, 6.

All the preaching of the apostles, recorded in the history of their acts, ran in this restrictive way of preaching Christ, as you may easily observe at your leisure. And the apostle Paul having spoken of him, as the *one mediator between God and man, who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time*; that is, either for all ranks and degrees of men, mention'd in the foregoing verses, or for *Gentiles* as well as *Jews*, mention'd in the following verse, he there immediately adds, *Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ and lie not) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity.*

Verse 7.

Thus we have consider'd this preaching, with regard to its *subject*. We now,

2. Proceed to its *acts*, and these may be reduced to the *three* following heads,

(1.) It is to *publish* or *declare* these things concerning Christ.

This

This is the proper sense of the word [*κηρύσσω*] in our text. It was commonly used among the Greeks, to express a proclamation or declaration of things by a publick officer. Accordingly Christ sent his disciples to go into all the world, and preach or publish the *gospel to every creature*. They are his heralds, to proclaim him Lord of all; and his ambassadors, to preach peace by him. Hence the apostles went forth declaring unto the people glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the Fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

Mark xvi.

15.

Acts xiii.

32, 33.

Chap. v.

42.

The ministers of Christ are commission'd officers, and are to go forth in his name and authority, to publish all that they find in their bibles concerning him, according to the best of their understandings, just as they find it there. My meaning is, that they are not to bring their own sense to it; but to search out Christ's sense in it, and to declare that to the people. They are to open and keep close to their commission, to withhold nothing that may be profitable concerning Christ, to add nothing of their own to it, and to make no alterations in it, but to set it forth in its own native simplicity, and inimitable glory. They are to preach him with all boldness, without fear of his and their adversaries; and to endeavour to set every thing concerning him in a clear,

clear, consistent, easy light, that, if possible, none might mistake, but all that hear might understand them.

They are to explain the things of Christ, as far as they find them explicable, to lay things together that may strike the best light upon one another, to expatiate upon the great and copious subject, insisting most upon the most important things relating to it, by all the variety of useful representations it is capable of, and to draw out its deep and hidden glories, that they may be exposed with perspicuity and enlargement to open view. And they are to publish all the incomprehensible mysteries of Christ, just as far as he hath reveal'd them, without attempting to explain them, any farther than his own word has cast a light upon them.

This is preaching Christ, as to the declaration that is to be made of him, or publication of the things that concern him. Hence,

(2.) It is to *confirm* and *defend* what is published concerning him.

Phil. i. 7,
17.

Acts ix. 22.
Chap. xvii.
2, 3.

1 Theff.
iii. 2.

The apostle was set for the defence and confirmation of the gospel. He preached Christ, that he is the Son of God; and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is the very Christ. He reasoned with them out of the scriptures, opening and alledging, that Christ must needs have suffered and risen again from the dead: and that this Jesus whom he preached unto them is Christ. He sent Timothy to the Christians at Thessalonica, to establish them, and to comfort them concerning their faith.

faith. And he went with *Barnabas* to *Lystra*, Acts xiv. 21, 22.
Iconium and *Antioch*, confirming the souls of
the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in
the faith.

The ministers of Christ are to hold fast the Tit. i. 9.
faithful word, as they have been taught, (or
according to the doctrine they have received
from Christ, *κατὰ τὴν διδασκίαν*) that they may
be able by sound doctrine, both to exhort and to
convince the gainsayers. They are to maintain
and support what they preach concerning
Christ, by the light and authority of his word,
by comparing scripture with scripture, and by
just reasonings upon them, and clear deducti-
ons from them, as far as the nature of things
will bear; and in this way, earnestly to con- Jude 3.
tend for the faith, which was once delivered to
the saints.

There are difficulties to be solv'd, objecti-
ons to be answer'd, seeming contradictions to
be reconcil'd, and incomprehensibles to be
contended for as reasonable to be received, on
the account of the sublimity of their own na-
ture, and on the foot of a divine testimony.
Obstinate, artful, captious, and profane gain-
sayers, are to be reprov'd, convinced, or silen-
ced; tender consciences, and doubting souls
to be assisted, relieved, and settled; honest
enquirers to be satisfied; and believers to be
established concerning the faith of Christ. All
truths relating to him are to be prov'd upon
solid scriptural principles, that they may main-
tain their ground to the honour of Christ, to

the rebuke and confutation of his enemies, and to the *furtherance and joy of faith*, in all those that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth.

All this belongs to this branch of preaching Christ. Hence.

(3.) It is to *propose and recommend him to the acceptance* of those to whom he is preach'd.

The word in our text carries such a sense of preaching, as consists in proclaiming publick edicts and commands, and in inviting slaves and captives to come in to a deliverer for their liberty, and in ordering things to be disposed of to the people. It was frequently used among the ancients, to express these sorts of publications *.

In this view of the word, we may consider it as transferr'd to the use of preaching the gospel, in which the ministers of Christ go forth in his name, proclaiming him to

* ἤλαθον ὃ πρὸς μὲ καὶ, χρηματίζονται ταμίᾳ οἱ περὶ τῷ Αστυνόμῳ βασιλείᾳ καὶ ἄλλων δυνάμεων, οἱ ἰλεγον ὅτι χρυσίον ἔστι παρὰ σφίσιν ἐπίσημον, διασπύς τις λέγοντες; καὶ ταῦτα οὕτω κατὰ τὴν πάντα ἀποφάναι πρὸς ὑμᾶς, ὅπερ αὖ καὶ ἐξήρθε· ὑποβίβει δὲ λαβόντες διαδοῦναι· ὅτι ἔχοντες ἢ τίνας προσδίδουσι, καὶ ὅτι ἀνέστη. τῇ δ' ἐγὼ καὶ τὴν οὐσαν ἐν τῷ στρατοπέδῳ κατέστη μὲν ἡδὴ, ἔφη, μὴ ἀδυναμῶν μὴδὲν, πολλοὶ δὲ τοὺς καπνίλους καὶ ἱπποὺς δὲ, τὶ ἔχοντες ἔλασεν πρᾶξιμα καὶ ταῦτα ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ ἀλλὰ ἐγὼ, ὅπως ἀναστήτω ἡμῶν τὸ στρατόπεδον καὶ ταῦτα μὲν εὐθὺς ἐκέντητον· Xenoph. de Cyr. Instit. Lib. 4. Sect. 22.

Αὐτοὶ δὲ οὐκ ἀνέστην ἐκείνῳ, αἱ τὶς ἐν τῷ Αστυνόμῳ—στρατοπέδῳ αὐτῶν ἀπὸ δούλων, ἢ Μήδων, ἢ Περσῶν—ἢ ἄλλαδ' ἐκ τῶν ἐκείνων· ἐκφάνισθαι· οἱ δ' ἀκούσαντες τοῦ κατὰ γὰρ (γὰρ. κέρως) ἡσυχία πολλὰ προσηύδα· (π. προσηύδα) ὁ δ' ἐκείνῳ αὐτῶν τοὺς περὶ αὐτὸν καλλίστους, ἔλεγον ὅτι ἐλκύνοντες αὐτοὺς ὅπως εἴπῃ ὅπλα ἀποφάναι αὐτοὺς αὐτοὺς δίδουσι· τὰ δ' ἐπιτηδία ὅπως αὐτοὺς ἔχοντες ἔφη αὐτῶν μάλιστα, &c. Ibid. Sect. 23.

the

Preaching Christ explain'd.

61

the people, proposing liberty to captives, and inviting sinners to come in to him for all salvation. Their business is, among other things, to declare that *this is the command* John iii. *of God, that they should believe on the name* ^{31.} *of his Son Jesus Christ*; and to propose him to their acceptance, that they, by divine grace, may be brought to *believe that Jesus is the* John xx. *Christ the Son of God, and that believing, they* ^{31.} *may have life thro' his name.*

Thus our apostle preach'd Christ, saying, in an address to the Jews, *To you is the word of this salvation sent. Be it known unto you* Acts xiii. *therefore, men and brethren, that thro' this man* 26, 38-41. *is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. Beware therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets, Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish.* He herein recommended and offered Christ to them, with a solemn caution against rejecting him. *And when the Jews* Verse 42. *were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath; i. e. That they might have the like offer of Christ to them, as had been made to the Jews. Their request was granted; and God own'd it with glorious success. The next sabbath-day came almost the whole* Ver. 44. *city together to hear the word of God. — Then* 46, 47, 48. *Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said to the Jews, It was necessary that the word of God should*

Preaching Christ explain'd.

should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles; that thou shouldst be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorify'd the word of the Lord: And as many as were ordain'd to eternal life believ'd.

1 Tim. i. 15. The apostle publish'd this, as a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom he reckon'd himself chief. And he spoke of himself, and other ministers of Christ, as persuading men; as having the word of reconciliation committed to them; and as ambassadors for Christ, as tho' God did beseech by them, praying them in Christ's stead, and using many engaging arguments with them, to be reconciled to God. And he goes on to beseech the Corinthians not to receive the grace of God, meaning the gospel of his grace, in vain. For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succour'd thee: Behold, now is the accepted time: Behold, now is the day of salvation. Hence,

At other times he speaks of the ministry, as given for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of

Eph. iv.
12, 13,
15.

Preaching Christ explain'd.

63

of the fulness of Christ: That — we may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.

According to this method of the apostle's preaching Christ, he is to be proposed and recommended to *sinners*, and to *believers*.

[1.] *To sinners.*

Christ is *set forth to be a propitiation, thro' Rom. iii. 25.*
faith in his blood. And he is to be preached to all sorts and degrees of sinners as such. He is to be recommended to them in all his glorious and endearing characters; as the Son of God and Saviour of sinners; as God-man-mediator; as a prophet, priest and king, indispensably necessary for them, every way suitable to their wants, and altogether worthy of their acceptance; as an able, faithful and willing Saviour; as the best that could be provided, or that can be desir'd; and as bringing in a complete and everlasting salvation from sin and wrath, from all the evils they feel, or fear, or are expos'd to, and unto all the blessedness and glory they are, or ever can be capable of in soul and body world without end.

He is to be recommended to them as chosen, appointed, and accepted of God to be a Saviour; as having in his great love to sinners freely taken upon him a saving-office, and as having gone thro' a humble state of obedience, sufferings and death in their nature, and in their room and stead, that he might effectually save them. He is to be recommended to them as living in heaven to employ him-
I self

Isa. liii.
10, 11.

self in his saving office ; as delighting that sinners should employ, receive, try, and trust him in it ; and as resolv'd to pursue it, and not to bear his gracious office in vain. For *he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days in them, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travel of his soul, and shall be satisfy'd: By his knowledge shall he justify many ; for he shall bear their iniquities.*

John vi.
37.

Prov. i.
23.

He is to be preached as the free gift of God to sinners ; and as a Saviour that hath grace enough in his heart, not only to invite them to himself, but likewise to enable them to come at his invitation and call, and to receive all that come to him. Hence he says, *All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me ; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out. And turn you at my reproof : Behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.* Here are two promises to one call, to encourage the sinner's hopes, that Christ will make it effectual. And if any, under an affecting sense of their own wants and unworthiness, and with an intire dependence on his power and grace, are brought seriously and heartily to ask of him, *he will give them living water.*

John iv.
10.

Chap. iii.
14, 15.

Under these recommendations of Christ, he is to be freely set forth or proposed to them for salvation, as the brazen serpent was to the Israelites for healing. For as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up ; that whosoever believeth

lieves in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life. And they are to be invited to come to him, under a promise of rest, and of rich supply, upon their coming, as he hath propos'd himself to them, saying, *Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden,* Mat. xi. 28. *and I will give you rest.* And if any man John vii. 37, 38. *thirst, let him come unto me and drink.* He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive.

John the Baptist preached the baptism of repentance, for the remission of sins, saying, *Repent ye, for the kingdom of God is at hand.* Mark i. 4. with Mat. iii. 2. Our blessed Lord began his ministry in the same way, as suitable to the introduction of the gospel-state, Mat. iv. 17. And he went preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, *The time is fulfill'd, and the kingdom of God is at hand: Repent ye and believe the gospel.* Mark i. 14, 15. He order'd his disciples to go out in his name, first to the Jews, and say unto them, *Come, for all things are now ready;* and afterwards to the Gentiles, and by all persuasive gospel-arguments to compel them to come in, that his house might be filled. Luke xiv. 17, 23.

Accordingly the apostle Peter preached to the Jews, saying, *Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.* And at another time he said, *Those things which God before* Chap. iii. 18, 19.

had shew'd by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfill'd. Repent ye therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. The apostle Paul likewise said to the

Chap. xvi. jaylor, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and
 31. thou shalt be saved. He testify'd to the Jews
 Chap. xx. and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God,
 21. and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. He
 Chap. xix. went into the synagogue at Ephesus, disputing
 8. and persuading the things concerning the
 kingdom of God. He expounded and testified
 Chap. xxviii. 23. the kingdom of God to them that came to him
 into his lodging at Rome, persuading them concerning Jesus. And when he went among the Gentiles, he preached, that now God com-
 Chap. xvii. mandeth all men every where to repent; because
 30, 31. he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordain'd; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

All this is answerable to the invitations, pleas, and promises used in the prophet, saying, Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye; buy and eat: yea come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? And your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight it self
 in

Iſa. lv. 1,
 2, 3, 6, 7.

in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: Hear, and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. — Seek ye the Lord while he maybe found, call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. And the language of all this shuts up the canon of the new testament, which closes with this gracious call, The Spirit and the bride say come. And let him that heareth say, come. And let him that is athirst, come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

Rev. xii.

17.

This preaching Christ is to be directed in the ministerial way to all people, where the gospel comes. They are the objects of it; they are nearly concern'd in it; and it hath to do with them promiscuously and indefinitely; none knowing who are God's elect among them, till the event declares it. Hence says the apostle, *He commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he, which was ordain'd of God to be the judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that thro' his name, whosoever believes in him, shall receive remission of sins. While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.*

Acts x.

42, 43, 44.

All sorts of rational, scriptural, evangelical arguments are to be used with sinners, to ac-

cept of Christ, and yield themselves up to him for all salvation, with an eye to, and hope in Christ to set them home by his Spirit upon their hearts. They are to be treated not like brutes or machines, but like men of rational faculties, capable of attending to, and considering what is proposed to them; and capable of being wrought upon by the Spirit of God, in a way suitable to their reasonable

Hof. xi. 4. natures, and of being *drawn*, under his gracious influence, *with cords of a man, with bands of love*. Hence says God by the prophet,

If. xlyi. 8. *Remember this, and shew yourselves men: Bring it again to mind, O ye transgressors*. And at another time the prophet complains, *There is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee*. And our Lord said to the Jews, *Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you*.

Chap. lxiv. 7.

John vi. 27.

The stupid careless minds of sinners are to be roused by proper considerations, for convincing them of their need of Christ, and bringing them home to him. They are to be expostulated with, intreated and persuaded, in the bowels of compassion, to embrace him, as he is freely offered to them in the gospel. They are to be dealt with by all the arguments of authority and grace, of duty and interest, of danger and safety, of gain and loss, of honour and disgrace, of pleasure and pain, of eternal happiness in

receiv-

receiving him, and of eternal misery for rejecting him.

All arguments are to be used with them, suited and appointed of God to work upon their judgments and consciences, their understandings, wills, and affections; suited to their desires and aversions, their joys and sorrows, hopes and fears. They are to be warn'd hereby to flee from the wrath to come, and encourag'd, under a sense of their guilt and danger, to flee for refuge to lay hold on the hope, that in Christ is set before them.

This is the ordinance of God, and is to be used and attended to as such, with expectation of his blessing upon it. All these methods of address to sinners are only means of his appoint-ment to be used in subordination to his gracious operation and influence. Unless his Spirit sets in with them, all will prove to no saving purpose; and we shall have sad occasion for the prophet's lamentation, *Who hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?* Isa. liii. 1. And therefore in all this, sinners are to be directed to Christ for all assistance and success. The springs of their help and hope are to be open'd, as they lie in him, that they may not run, and we may not preach in vain.

Christ is likewise to be recommended and propos'd in our preaching,

[2.] *To believers.*

They are to be helped, *who have believed through grace.* Acts xviii. 27. Christ is to be preached to them

them for their farther acceptance of him, and devotedness to him. They are to be exhort-
 Acts xi. *orted to cleave with purpose of heart to the*
 23. *Lord; and as they have receiv'd Christ Jesus*
 Col. ii. 6, *the Lord, so to walk in him: rooted and built*
 7. *up in him, and established in the faith, as they*
have been taught, abounding therein with
thanksgiving. And he is to be recommended
 to them, that they may have fellowship with
 1 John i. *him, and with the Father thro' him, and that*
 3, 4. *their joy may be full.* We have no domi-
 2 Cor. i. *nion over their faith, but are to be helpers of*
 24. *their joy.*

All his glories, as far as we can discover them, are to be open'd before them. What he is in his wonderful person, office, and love: What he has undertaken and engag'd on their behalf from eternity, and perform'd in time: What he has done and suffered for them on earth, and is doing for them in heaven, and will do for them at the last day, and for ever afterwards: What he has purchased, provided, and secured in himself for them: What he has already bestowed upon them and promised to them: And what he expects and demands from them: In a word, all that he is in himself and is to them; and all that they are made to be in and by him, and are oblig'd to be to him, should be set before them in the most clear and copious manner possible, to recommend him to them, and to engage them to him. But I need

need not enlarge here, after what has been already said concerning Christ.

All this should be propos'd to them, to encourage their continual and increasing faith, love, hope, and joy, admiration, worship, obedience, gratitude, and praise. All this should be attempted and enforc'd upon them, in the name of Christ, and with an expectation of his presence and blessing, that they may know their privileges in him, and their duty towards him; and that their hearts may be comforted, strengthened and animated in his ways, till the whole design of his grace toward them shall be perfected in their endless glory.

Having given this account of what it is to preach Christ, we now proceed to

II. Offer some considerations to recommend this preaching; or to shew why the ministers of the gospel should preach Christ.

After we have heard what it is to preach Christ, one would think it sufficiently pleads for it self; and that there should be little occasion for arguments to set the governing aim of gospel-ministrations towards him. But he that knows any thing of the state of human nature, and observes the turn of the present age, may easily see that something of this kind can't be unseasonable to awaken our attention to it, and to stir up myself and others to keep this point in view. Suffer me therefore humbly

Preaching Christ recommended.

to suggest the following considerations for this purpose.

1. *Christ is a subject truly excellent, and every way worthy to be preached.*

The things we have heard concerning him deserve our highest regards, and our utmost labour to display, establish and recommend them. There is an infinite dignity in this subject, and we need not be ashamed of it. 'Tis the glory of ministers to be conversant with Christ themselves, and to preach him to others. Our apostle triumphed in Christ and in the manifestation of the savour of his knowledge in every place. How ever some despis'd, and others stumbled at it, He preach'd Christ crucify'd, and to them that were call'd, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. And his heart was so intirely in it, that he determin'd not to know, or not to make known in his ministrations, any thing among them, save Jesus Christ, and him crucify'd.

2 Cor ii. 14.
1 Cor. i. 23, 24.
Chap. ii. 2.

Christ is the object of angels wonder and adoration. They thought it their honour and delight to proclaim his birth. A chief among them brought the good tidings of great joy to our world; and crowds of angels attended the joyful errand, Praising God, and saying, *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.* And ever since they had any notices of the glorious theme, they all turn their enquiring thoughts toward it. They make it their closest study and

Luke ii. 10, 13, 14.

Preaching Christ recommended

73

and their chief delight: *They desire to look* ^{1 Pet. i. 12.}
into it. They attended the Lord Christ with
triumphant acclamations in his ascension to
glory: *Twenty thousand, even thousands of* ^{Psal. lxxviii. 17, 18.}
angels were his chariots, himself being in the
midst of them, when *he ascended on high.*
And they chearfully publish his praises in
heaven: They unite their songs with the in-
numerable multitude of the redeem'd in high
ascriptions of *Blessing, and honour, and glory,* ^{Rev. v. 13.}
and power unto him that sitteth upon the throne,
and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

Shall those exalted spirits, those superior
ranks of created minds, shall they think him
worthy of their attention, and of their praise?
And shall not we think it our glory to pro-
claim and recommend him? We, whose in-
tellectual endowments are so much below
theirs; we, who have not such clear and ex-
tensive views of God and of his ways, under
other considerations of him, as they have;
and we, who are more nearly concern'd in
Christ and related to him, and have more to
do with him, and stand in greater need of him
than they; we have so much the higher rea-
sons to glory in him, and to set out his praise.

What can be worthy to be known and
preach'd, if Christ be not so? The glory of
all divine perfections shines with splendors all
over amiable in the face of Jesus Christ. Here
the chief of God's eternal counsels, and en-
dearing ways of wisdom and love are opened
before us. Here are the utmost condescen-

L

tions

tions of God, and advancements of man. Here is the center of union and communion between God and fallen man. Here is the grand medium of all gracious communications from him, and of all holy and comfortable access to him. And here is the foundation of all gospel-privileges and obligations, of all capacities of duty and enjoyment, of all religious services and delights, of all recovery from the ruins of the fall, and of all rectitude and blessedness that human nature can be adorn'd with.

His eternal Deity puts a glory upon, and gives efficacy to the whole of his mediation: his mediation is the life and soul of all our religion: And our religion takes in all that is honourable to God and human nature, and all that is profitable to our selves or others. Here is boundless room and scope for the widest thoughts to expatiate, and for the most exalted genius to entertain it self with endless pleasure and advantage. Here is a noble subject that can never be exhausted; and the farther we go into it, the more it approves itself to us, and the higher in glories rise upon us. O, who would not wish to be employed in preaching Christ!

2. *Preaching Christ is peculiarly suited to the gospel dispensation.*

This is a dispensation appropriated to Christ, and to what concerns him; it is set up by him; it takes its denomination and authority from him; it makes the clearest, the fullest and most explicit discoveries of him, that

that ever were made known to the sons of men; and he is so nearly interested in it, that in the language of his dispensation, preaching the gospel, and preaching Christ, are convertible terms, or terms of the same import. All its parts center in him; all its doctrines and institutions refer to him, and derive their glory and efficacy from him.

All that was said of Christ in the old testament, is transferred into the new, and is improved with additional enlargement, light and lustre. He is the grand article of the new testament, that runs thro' all the *Evangelists* and *Epistles*, the *Acts*, and the *Revelations*, as their governing argument, and that distinguishes his religion from all others. The sum of the gospel dispensation is *grace and truth by Jesus Christ*; and our characters, profession, privileges, obligations, hopes and happiness, as *Christians*, all derive from him, and depend upon him. And shall the ministers of such a dispensation, that is founded on Christ, that is full of Christ, that is design'd and calculated for his glory, for the glory of God in him, and for the advancement of his kingdom in the world, shall these ministers neglect to preach Christ, or to publish the gospel of his Kingdom? Shall not the distinguishing characteristicks of this dispensation run thro' all their holy ministrations? Was *John* the Baptist greater than all the prophets that had gone before him, because he spoke so much and so plainly of

John i. 17.

Christ? and shall gospel ministers come behind *John*, or to be less in the kingdom of God than he? How doth this look as if they did not belong to that kingdom, since our
 Mat. xi. 11. Lord hath said, that *he that is least therein is greater than he!* How incongruous is this to the glorious dispensation we are under! and how unworthy of their character, that pretend to a ministry in his kingdom! Hence,
 3. 'Tis the special office of Gospel ministers to preach Christ.

They are ministers of Christ to declare him to the people. He hath given them their commission, and authorized them to
 Mark xvi. 51. preach his *gospel to every creature; to preach*
 Luke xxiv. 47. *repentance and remission of sins in his name; to baptize into the faith of him; to administer the sacred memorials of his death in remembrance of him, and evidently to set him forth as crucified, in the whole compass of their office.*

As they are *stewards of the mysteries of God, ministers of Christ, his servants, and ambassadors for him*, the gospel of reconciliation by Jesus Christ is *committed to them*. They are intrusted with it; They are bound to
 1 Cor. ix. 16. preach it; *necessity is laid upon them, yea wo is unto them, if they preach not the gospel.*

The gospel they are intrusted with, takes its denomination from Christ, and their preaching that gospel is frequently charactiz'd by preaching Christ. And shall they be unmindful of, or unfaithful to their trust? shall they not
 act

act up to their office-character in the discharge of it? How treacherous and injurious is this to Christ! and how dishonourable and dangerous to themselves? If they are not willing to make it their chief business to preach Christ; or if they are ashamed to own and preach him, with what face can they call themselves the ministers of Christ? or how can they expect that he should approve and own them as his servants? Hence,

4. *The most desirable success of the ministry very much depends on preaching Christ.*

His commission, while we keep to it, is attended with his promise, saying, *Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.* Mat. xxviii. 20. & xvii. 20.

And where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

The gospel ministration is the glorious ministration of the Spirit, that giveth life. And we all, says the apostle of new testament believers, *with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.* 2 Cor. iii. 6, 8, 18. Gal. iii. 2, 13, 14.

The believing Galatians received the Spirit, not by the works of the law but by the hearing of faith; and Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles thro' Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit thro' faith.

The Spirit of Christ loves to breathe in the doctrines of Christ. He comes from Christ, as

78 *Preaching Christ recommended.*

as our exalted head and redeemer ; and the
 John xvi. very design of his coming is to *glorify him,*
 24. *by receiving of his things, and shewing them*
to us. Hence, while the apostle Peter was
 preaching Christ to Cornelius and his friends,
 Acts x. 43, that *thro' his name, whosoever believeth in him,*
 44. & xi. *shall receive remission of sins, the Holy Ghost*
 20, 21. *fell on all them that heard the word.* And
 when the men of Cyprus and Cyrene spake
 to the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus,
 the hand of the Lord was with them ; and a
 great number believ'd and turned to the Lord.

But why do I mention particular instances ?
 'tis evident beyond dispute thro' all the *acts*
of the apostles, that 'twas the *preaching of*
Christ, which was own'd and honour'd of
 God, with all the glorious and amazing suc-
 cess, among both *Jews and Gentiles*, record-
 ed there. 'Twas this that made Christians,
 and built them up in Christ.

This is the great ordinance of God for the
 conversion of sinners, and edification of the
 saints. For *how shall they call on him in*
 Rom. x. *whom they have not believed ? and how shall*
 14. *they believe in him, of whom they have not*
 Eph. iv. *heard ? and the work of the ministry is for the*
 12, 13, 15. *edifying of the body of Christ ; till we all come*
in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge
of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto
the measure of the stature of the fulness of
Christ :— and that speaking the truth in love,
we may grow up into him in all things, which
is the head, even Christ.

Christ

Christ crucify'd is the power of God; and he has more or less in all ages set his seal to the preaching of him. The number of real converts from sin to God, and the power of practical Godliness in heart and life, have usually rose or sunk in a great proportion to the faithful preaching, or not preaching Christ. Hence the apostle was not *ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God to salvation, to every one that believeth.*—
For therein is the righteousness of God reveal'd from faith to faith.

¹ Cor. i.
23, 24

Rom. i.
16, 17.

If therefore ministers would not be unconcerned, whether they study and labour in vain, and spend their strength for nought; whether the hand of the Lord be with them in their ministrations, or no: If they desire to be own'd of God with the best success, they should take his way for it, in preaching Christ. Hence,

5. *The honour of God and of christian religion are nearly concerned in preaching Christ.*

His brightest glories are display'd and recommended to us in the person and mediation of Jesus Christ; and the glory of Christian religion stands in him. All its vitals spring up and thrive under his influence, as appears from what has been said concerning him. But if his name is not known; if it don't reign and triumph in the discourses that are preach'd and heard, how shall this glory of God be seen and advanced in its most indear-
 ing

ing and exalted strains? and how shall Christian religion shine in its proper beauties, and peculiar lustres? and are not these tender, and important points? ought not the ministers of Christ to be concern'd for them? Hence,

6. Preaching Christ is delightful and improving to ones own and others souls.

Our apostle was much affected with the grace that made him a minister, *to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ*, and wherever Christ was preached, *he therein did rejoice, and would rejoice.*

Eph. iii. 8.
Phil. i. 18.

'Tis the most pleasant work that a minister can be employed in, or that others can attend upon, if they have a true relish for it. All the great and glorious things of Christ, relating to his adorable person, riches, condescension and love, the glory of the divine perfections, counsel and will in him, and the near concern he has in the whole compass of true religion, are delightful advantageous themes to think, and talk, and hear of. They enlarge the minds and hearts that are let in to them. They diffuse a sacred pleasure thro' the whole soul, and rectify all disorders within. They raise a man's spirit above this world, refine his temper, give him the noblest views and prospects, and fill him with a divine transport, with all joy and peace in believing, with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. They are the most refreshing and entertaining sphere that one would wish to move

move in; and the soul that lives most in the midst of its light and influence, can't but say, Lord, it is good to be here. Once more,

7. *There are but few in our days that preach Christ, and but few that regard him.*

The greatest number of preachers and hearers seem contented to lay him aside, and too many there are among us, that set themselves against him. His name is seldom heard of in conversation, unless in a way of strife and debate; or, which is infinitely worse, in a way of contempt, reproach and blasphemy; and I am persuaded, it never entered less, than at this day, into our practical godliness, into our solemn assemblies, into our dealings with God, into our dependences on him, expectations from him, and devotedness unto him.

The present modish turn of religion looks, as if we began to think that we have no need of a Mediator, but that all our concerns were to be manag'd with God, as an absolute God. The religion of nature makes up the darling topicks of our age; and the religion of Jesus is valued only for the sake of that, and only so far as it carries on the light of nature, and is a bare improvement of that kind of light. All that is *restrictively* Christian, or that is peculiar to Christ; every thing concerning him, that has not its apparent foundation in natural light, or that goes beyond its principles, is way'd, and banish'd.

M

and

and despis'd. And even moral duties themselves, which are essential to the very being of Christianity, are usually harangued upon, without any evangelical turn, or reference to Christ, as *fruits of righteousness to the praise and glory of God by him*. They are placed in the room of Christ, are set up independent of him, and are urg'd upon principles and with views, ineffectual to secure their practice, and more suited to the sentiments and temper of a heathen, than of those that take the whole of their religion from Christ.

How many sermons may one hear that leave out Christ, both name and thing, and that pay no more regard to him, than if we had nothing to do with him? what a melancholy symptom, what a threatening omen is this! do we not already feel its dismal effects in the growth of infidelity, in the rare instances of conversion-work, and in the cold, low and withering state of religion among the professors of it, beyond what has been known in some former days? May not these things be chargeable in great measure on a prevailing disuse of preaching Christ? And where will they end, if the disuse goes on, and little or nothing concerning him is to be heard among us? How should all the ministers of Christ, that heartily love him, that are concerned for his honour, and for the honour of religion, as *Christian*, be affected at these thoughts! And how should they be

be excited, by the too general neglect of others, to be so much the more frequent, earnest, and explicate in preaching Christ themselves!

APPLICATION.

First, *Let us hereby judge of the great excellence of a gospel-ministry.*

The Son of God, the only Saviour of sinners, is its principal subject. It discovers and recommends him to us for all the great and glorious purposes that are of the utmost importance, and eternal consequence. It is worthy of God's appointment, and of our approbation. It is honourable to him, and beneficial to us. It is suited to display the glory of all his perfections in beautiful and entire harmony, to give us an amiable view of him to recover us from all the ruins of our fallen state, and to bring us into a state of communion with him and conformity to him.

It is full of dignity and delight, superior to all other ways of intercourse between God and us. It gives us a nobler entertainment than if all the mysteries of nature and art were unfolded to our minds. And it is a better treasure, than all the gold of the *Indies*, than all the riches of the creation. No system of natural principles, no schemes of men, no other institution of God could ever match it, or be once compar'd with it, and with the things concern'd in it.

God hath put the highest honour upon it; he owns and succeeds it. And however others may despise it, his servants should magnify their office, and take pleasure in it. And all that hear them preaching Christ, should know that the kingdom of God is brought nigh unto them.

Secondly, *Let the grace, that hath appointed Christ to be preach'd, affect your hearts, for whose sakes it hath made that appointment.*

This excellent ministry is not principally appointed for their sakes, who are employ'd in it, or barely to put an honour upon them; but for the sake of others, for their consolation and salvation, even *for the elect's sakes, that they may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.* The ministers of Christ are sent to *preach not themselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and themselves the churches, servants for Jesus's sake.* They are *ministers by whom ye believe, even as the Lord gives to every man.* And all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas — *all are yours; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.* All their gifts and labours are for the church; and all their ministry is for its edification, establishment, and increase.

God might have sent messengers of wrath and executioners of justice, to clear the stage of a guilty world. But he hath sent messengers of peace and reconciliation to preach Christ

Application.

85

Christ to you, and to open a door of salvation before you in him, to *bring good tidings of good, to publish salvation, and to say unto Zion, thy God reigneth.* He holds out the golden scepter in a gospel-ministry, that you may present your petitions with faith in the name of Christ, for all the blessings of his kingdom. And there is yet room for the most unworthy hell-deserving sinner to make his request with hope of finding acceptance, and to put in for mercy through Jesus Christ to eternal life, *whosoever will, may come and take the water of life freely.* And *him that comes unto Christ, upon the call of the gospel, he will in no wise cast out.* Isa. lii. 7
Rev. xxi. 17
John vi. 37

What a merciful dispensation is this! How full of bounteous and endearing grace, beyond all that ever could have been imagined, if God himself had not revealed it, and beyond all that has ever been made known by any other means to the sinful sons of men! How worthy is this of all acceptance! How should we admire it! How would we be affected with it! And what thanksgivings are due to God on this account!

Thirdly, *Let it be your great concern to use and improve the preaching Christ.*

If ministers are to preach Christ; the people are to hear him preached; the work is relative, and the duty of one infers the duty of the other. And where Christ is most and best preach'd in all his characters, and in the various and extensive influence he hath upon

upon the whole of our religion, holiness and happiness, that's the best preaching, and there it's best to hear.

Attend therefore upon the preaching of Christ, that you may hear and your souls may live; that the great ends for which he is to be preached may be answered by his grace upon you; that you may know, and believe in him, and yield up your selves to him; that you may receive a whole Christ, his person and all his offices for your selves, and for all the purposes for which you need him; and may have your whole souls engaged to him in all that worship, homage, and love, duty and service, that you ought to pay him; that you may give him an entertainment worthy of him, may cleave with full purpose of heart to him, and may *adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things.* For the gospel of the grace of God that brings salvation, hath appeared, in the preaching of Christ, to all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godlily in this present world; looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God, and, or even, our Saviour Jesus Christ: who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

Tit. ii.
10,—14.

When Christ is preach'd, 'tis at thy utmost peril, O sinner! to neglect or despise him. For there is salvation in no other, and there is

Acts iv.
12.

no

Application.

no other name under heaven given among men whereby thou must be sav'd. And how shalt thou escape if thou neglectest so great salvation? Beware therefore, when thou hearest of Christ, lest that come upon thee which is spoken of in the prophets, Behold ye despisers, and wonder, and perish. It had been better for thee never to have heard of Christ, than to hear of him, and to lie out from him and reject him. For this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. And 'twill be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for thee. Every discovery of Christ in the gospel, which thou hast shut thine Eyes against, and every offer of Christ which thou hast refus'd will add a sting to thy guilt, and aggravate thy condemnation in that awful day.

But behold he stands at the door, and knocks: He doth this by the ministry of the gospel, and by the Spirit of light and grace that accompanies it! And he says, If any man will hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me; i. e. I will give him kind, free, and friendly entertainment. If thy heart is open to receive that Jesus whom we preach, he will enter with all his salvation. If thou art willing to be sav'd by him in the way of the gospel, as he is preach'd to thee there, thou may'st securely depend upon his grace and faithfulness, that he will not reject

Happy, for ever happy will be
for thee, that thou ever heardst of Christ.
His word being mixt with faith will profite thee
to eternal life. It will be the gospel of thine
own salvation, and thou wilt bring forth fruit
to his glory, and to thine own account.

Thy eternal all is concern'd in the use thou
makest of Christ. If thou receivest him as
he is propos'd to thee in the gospel, thou art
safe and happy! But if thou rejectest him,
thou art lost for ever. For a conclusion of all,
consider what himself hath said. *Blessed is*

Prov. vii. *the man that heareth me, watching daily at*
34-36. *my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors:*
For whoso findeth me, findeth life, and shall
obtain favour of the Lord. But he that sin-
neth against me, wrongeth his own soul; all
they that hate me, love death.

ERRATUM

Page 45. line ult. for, *the read their,*

P. L. N. I. S.

6 JU 65